

April 2, 2009

To: Members of the Senate Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation Committee
Re: HB583

This letter is in support of HB 583 to provide funding for Food Processing and Energy technical assistance centers in Montana. Currently, SMDC is a Bio-Products Innovation center (BPIC) and in the previous 18 months SMDC has provided a wide range of technical assistance to 26 businesses in the BPIC program. These projects are broken down by energy, timber/biomass, oilseed crushing plants, beef/packers, value-added food, anaerobic digesters, cellulosic ethanol plants, biomass/electric generation, among others.

The net results of SMDC efforts are that more than 21 jobs have been retained, 34 people were trained, and \$323,239.00 was leveraged for training, startup and expansion activities.

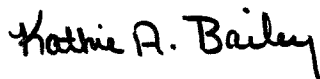
Examples of businesses we've worked with include:

- Cream of the West, in Harlowton, processes and packages locally grown grains for breakfast and snack foods. SMDC furnishes technical assistance for their business plans, feasibility studies, expansion ideas, and training opportunities such as MMEC's 'Eureka Winning Ways' process.
- We have assisted in development of the business plan, helped secure grants for the feasibility study and equipment, and aided in the design of a shared-use commercial kitchen at the Fergus County Fairgrounds. Currently 35 value-added producers process their food stuffs at this facility.
- Big Spring Food Co-op, another BPIC project, has received technical assistance from SMDC to help launch this project that covers a wide range of subjects and includes but is not limited to: drafting of By Laws; Articles of Incorporation; selling of shares; feasibility studies; business structure; industry trends; business plan; corporate documents, projection review, cash flow and budget, documents for initial filing; securing a RBEG grant to purchase equipment; establishing a board; selection of store furnishings and set-up; creation of new strategies to develop a symbiotic relationship between them their producers, and the customer. This outlet provides marketing opportunities for local producers not otherwise available.

- Ole Norgaard of North Frontier Foods and Joe Hamill of Autumn Creek Farms, have both received technical assistance and education from SMDC to further their organic and locally grown produce operations.
- We have assisted 8 businesses that were looking for information and assistance in start-up biomass or bio-fuels operations in Central Montana. SMDC made available data from previous feasibility studies and community wildfire protection plans that would enable them to make informed decisions for these projects. Three of the proposed projects are expansions of out of state companies looking to locate new divisions in Central Montana that forecast employment of more than 50 people in these new facilities.

Montana has a strong agriculture base which could support the economy if businesses were assisted and our products were value-added. We hope that you will support this ongoing venture to provide assistance to our agriculture economy and create a larger value-added segment to that economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathie A. Bailey". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Kathie A. Bailey,
Executive Director

April 2, 2009

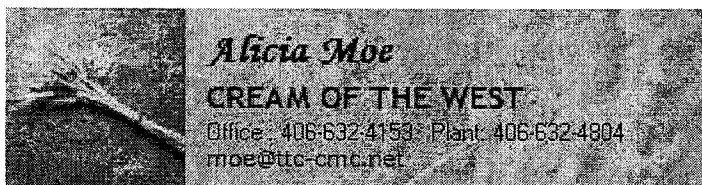
TO: Members of the Senate Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation Committee
RE: HB 583 Funding Six Established Food & Agricultural Development Centers

We would like to submit this letter of support for funding of six established Food and Agriculture Development Centers. Big Spring Food Cooperative has been the beneficiary of many hours of technical assistance provided by Snowy Mountain Development Corporation (SMDC) through their BPIC (Bio-Products Innovation Center) program. The guidance they've given has helped us take our locally grown fresh food co-op idea from a concept our group had to the reality we have today.

Expertise brought to the table by SMDC enabled us to determine the feasibility of our project and the step-by-step process needed to establish a business operated as a cooperative. SMDC was also instrumental in our securing an RBEG (Rural Business Enterprise Grant) grant to purchase the coolers and other equipment for the store. They continue to provide technical assistance for business operations, marketing, and other organizational needs.

There is no other resource in Central Montana that could have given us the personal, one-on-one, education we needed to launch this business. If we had to pay for this know-how, we could have never gotten past the idea stage because there was no money to contract a business consultant. Funding the Food and Agriculture Development Centers in HB 583 will help keep us going and provide opportunities for others.

Big Spring Food Cooperative
Lewistown, Montana



April 2, 2009

Dear Members of the Senate Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation Committee:

Cream of the West supports funding for the proposed Food and Agriculture Development Centers in HB 583. Since 2003, when they helped us to acquire Cream of the West and move it to Harlowton, Snowy Mountain Development Corporation (SMDC) through their BPIC (Bio-Products Innovation Center) program has provided us with assistance in growing our business as well as valuable training for our staff.

SMDC has continued to provide us with technical assistance for business operations, training, and financing. Feasibility studies, business plans, equipment selection, new product development and marketing are some of the areas where their targeted assistance positively impacted our business growth.

Over the past six years the SMDC staff has acquired a 'hands on' knowledge of our business that has made their assistance extremely valuable. No one else is as well equipped to deliver these services to us. And, I would imagine, the same is true of other small business in the Central Montana Region.

Funding the Food and Agriculture Development Centers in HB 583 will enable SMDC to continue to help Montana-based businesses, like Cream of the West, to remain a centerpiece of Montana's economic development policy. This, we believe, is an essential part of Montana's home-grown economic stimulus package.

Sincerely,

Alicia & Richard Moe

Alicia & Richard Moe
CREAM OF THE WEST
Home office: 406-632-4153
Plant office: 406-632-4804

CREAM OF THE WEST
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Bethann Garramon

Written testimony

Submitted April 2, 2009 in support of HB 583

My name is Bethann Garramon, I am 24 years old, and I live in rural central Montana. I grew up in Choteau, and currently live west of Dupuyer, MT. My family's third generation business is in an agriculture-related industry – wooden fencing materials. I was immersed in rural agricultural community and economic culture from childhood, and have a degree emphasizing Sustainable Food and Agriculture from the University of Montana. I currently work for a conservation education program on the Rocky Mountain Front which focuses on the interrelationships of natural resources, landscape conservation, and traditional agriculture. I am involved with a community development process in Choteau emphasizing community-based solutions to poverty-related issues in the community, and in Teton County.

Since this community development process began in 2008, there have been countless references to the once-vibrant agricultural elements of our region. Although there are still many family-owned farms and ranches, their options for marketing their produce (livestock or otherwise) have been steadily declining. Of particular significance to this observation is the devastating fire around a decade ago that destroyed a family-owned meat packing plant – the plant employed a number of community members, served producers from the surrounding region, and increased the value of the products being marketed in and beyond Teton County by producers from the region.

Today, conversations often hark back to the multi-layered value and contribution of that packing plant, as well as a feed processing plant that burned down several years later. With the loss of these two facilities, Choteau area producers' options are even more limited. Frequently, producers and non-agricultural community members alike emphatically identify the need for State of Montana support, encouragement, and facilitation of the enhancement and development of value-added production capacity required in order to 1) remain competitive in an increasingly demanding global marketplace, and more importantly 2) to establish food system self-sufficiency on a level that provides both financial and ecological stability for our state.

I challenge you, as representatives of this state's citizens, to actively participate in developing Montana's agricultural and food-product systems into an example to be emulated globally. Empowering creativity and diversity in Montana's producers is a fundamental step, and HB 583 strives to ensure these producers will have access to the expertise and resources required to continue developing our state's role as an exemplary food system. I encourage you to support legislation such as HB 583, and to contribute to Montanan's efforts to enhance the capacity of Montana's food system.

Fergus County Fairgrounds

P.O. Box 1098, Lewistown, Montana 59457

Phone: 406.535.8841 Fax:406.535.4060

April 2, 2009

RE: HB 583

Dear Members of the Senate Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation Committee:

We would like to submit this letter of support for funding of the Food and Agriculture Development Centers. Our shared-use commercial kitchen project is the product of a great deal of technical assistance provided by Snowy Mountain Development Corporation (SMDC) through their BPIC (Bio-Products Innovation Center) program. SMDC has helped us put together a commercial kitchen that was used by 35 different caterers and food vendors last year. We also are working to attract value-added food processors. Our new facility will enable them to move their operations from the home to a sanitary commercial kitchen equipped with quality professional grade appliances and help them grow their businesses.

SMDC's knowledgeable staff helped us to establish the feasibility, equipment selection, and layout of the kitchen and the business plan needed for operating a shared-use business venue. Funds from a RBEG (Rural Business Enterprise Grant) grant, facilitated by SMDC, were used to purchase the coolers, freezer, range and other equipment for the kitchen. They continue to provide technical assistance for business operations, and other organizational needs.

This project was made possible by SMDC's ability to provide their technical assistance for our business needs through the BPIC program with no cost to us for their services. There is no one else in Lewistown that could have done this. Funding the Food and Agriculture Development Centers in HB 583 will provide opportunities like this for others in Central Montana.

Sincerely,

Dave Donaldson, Manager
Fergus County Fairgrounds Shared-Use Commercial Kitchen
Lewistown, Montana